UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
United States Patent and Trademark Office
Address: COMMISSIONER FOR PATENTS
P.O. Box 1450
Alexandria, Virginia 22313-1450
www.uspto.gov

APPLICATION NO.	FILING DATE	FIRST NAMED INVENTOR	ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.	CONFIRMATION NO.
10/016,566	10/30/2001	Naoki Tagami	112857-300	6359

29175 7590 09/30/2008

BELL, BOYD & LLOYD, LLP
P. O. BOX 1135
CHICAGO, IL 60690

EXAMINER	
ROSWELL, MICHAEL	

ART UNIT	PAPER NUMBER
2173	

MAIL DATE	DELIVERY MODE
09/30/2008	PAPER

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

The time period for reply, if any, is set in the attached communication.

Office Action Summary	Application No.	Applicant(s)	
	10/016,566	TAGAMI ET AL.	
	Examiner	Art Unit	
	Michael Roswell	2173	

-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --

Period for Reply

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE *3* MONTH(S) OR THIRTY (30) DAYS, WHICHEVER IS LONGER, FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133). Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

Status

1)☒ Responsive to communication(s) filed on *03 September 2008*.

2a)☐ This action is **FINAL**. 2b)☒ This action is non-final.

3)☐ Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

Disposition of Claims

4)☒ Claim(s) *1,2,5 and 7-13* is/are pending in the application.

4a) Of the above claim(s) _____ is/are withdrawn from consideration.

5)☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are allowed.

6)☒ Claim(s) *1,2,5 and 7-13* is/are rejected.

7)☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are objected to.

8)☐ Claim(s) _____ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

Application Papers

9)☐ The specification is objected to by the Examiner.

10)☐ The drawing(s) filed on _____ is/are: a)☐ accepted or b)☐ objected to by the Examiner.

Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).

Replacement drawing sheet(s) including the correction is required if the drawing(s) is objected to. See 37 CFR 1.121(d).

11)☐ The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner. Note the attached Office Action or form PTO-152.

Priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119

12)☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).

a)☐ All b)☐ Some * c)☐ None of:

1.☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.

2.☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. _____.

3.☐ Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).

* See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.

Attachment(s)

1) ☐ Notice of References Cited (PTO-892)
2) ☐ Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948)
3) ☐ Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO/SB/08) Paper No(s)/Mail Date _____.
4) ☐ Interview Summary (PTO-413) Paper No(s)/Mail Date. _____ .
5) ☐ Notice of Informal Patent Application
6) ☐ Other: _____.

DETAILED ACTION

This Office action is in response to the Request for Continued Examination filed 3 September 2008.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 103

The text of those sections of Title 35, U.S. Code not included in this action can be found in a prior Office action.

Claims 1-2, 5, and 7-13 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Estrada et al (US Patent 6,732,148), hereinafter Estrada, Hatlelid et al (US Patent 6,772,195), hereinafter Hatlelid, Bunney et al (US Patent 6,446,112), hereinafter Bunney, and Morris et al (US Patent 6,496,851), hereinafter Morris. The claim rejections are further supported by mIRC Version Notes taken from http://www.mirc.co.uk/versions.txt, hereinafter mIRC Version Notes.

Regarding claims 1 and 7-9, Estrada teaches storing a user space and a list of spatial locations (the use of collaboration tools such as email, chat rooms, electronic whiteboards, or conferencing software, at col. 1, lines 52-60) and a list of users associated with a virtual space being generated by a first user and includes at least one second user denied admission to the user space and at least one second user granted admission to the user space (taught as the security of different virtual rooms through the use of access control lists [ACLs] that determine the level of access users are allowed for the virtual space, at col. 15, line 54 through col. 16, line 25), where the list of predetermined spatial locations is designated by the first user (taught as the creation of rooms and pages at col. 5, lines 50-65), placing means for placing the list of predetermined spatial locations stored in the storage means in a predetermined user space in the virtual space in response to an instruction from the first user, wherein other users are able to

use the list of predetermined spatial locations (taught as the “place creation” method and database storage of col. 18, lines 14-35, which includes a user creating a room containing pages analogous to the claimed “spatial locations, which are subsequently accessed and navigated by other users of the room. The pages are maintained in a list).

However, Estrada fails to explicitly teach notifying means for notifying the first user when a second user makes a request for admission to the user space occupied by the first user, determining means for determining, based on the request for admission, whether the second user is denied admission to the user space or granted admission to the user space based on the list of users stored in the storage means, and control means for controlling admission of the second user to the user space based on a response from the first user, the response being based on the determination made by the determining means. Estrada further fails to explicitly teach the storing of at least one list of users associated with a chat session within the user space.

Hatlelid teaches a virtual world chat environment similar to that of Estrada. Furthermore, Hatlelid teaches notifying means for notifying the first user when a second user makes a request for admission to the user space occupied by the first user (taught as the “ask permission” option by which a new user must prompt a room initiator for permission to join the chat, at col. 1, lines 1-18), and control means for controlling admission of the second user to the user space based on a response from the first user, the response being based on the determination made by the determining means (inherent in that a room initiator may accept or deny a request to join a chat). Furthermore, Hatlelid explicitly teaches storing a list of users associated with a chat session within the user space, taught as the ability of a user initiating a chat session to list the usernames or other identifiers of other users invited to a chat session, at col. 5, lines 13-20.

Therefore, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art, having the teachings of Estrada and Hatlelid before him at the time the invention was made to modify the virtual space security of Estrada to include the notifying and control means of Hatlelid. One would have been motivated to make such a combination, as one of the goals of Estrada is to provide increased security in a virtual space, at col. 32, lines 31-34 and lines 39-42.

However, Estrada and Hatlelid fail to explicitly teach processing means for maintaining a user space within the virtual space, wherein the user space comprises spatial locations that virtually represent physical areas owned and occupied by a first user, and wherein the first user controls admission of other users within the user space for chat sessions with the first user, and the list of users associated with a chat session including at least one second user denied admission to the user space. Furthermore, Estrada and Hatlelid fail to explicitly teach determining, based on the request for admission, whether the second user is denied admission to the user space or granted admission to the user space based on the list of users stored in the storage means.

Bunney teaches the use of Internet Relay Chat (IRC) protocol and commands similar to the chat environments of Estrada and Hatlelid. Furthermore, Bunney teaches the inclusion of ACLs, similar to those of Estrada, that regulate access to a chat environment (see col. 2, lines 1-3). mIRC Version Notes detail that as far back as 1995 IRC programs supported “ban lists” for specifying which users are denied admission to a particular chat environment. Furthermore, Bunney teaches processing means for maintaining a user space within the virtual space, wherein the user space comprises spatial locations that virtually represent physical areas owned and occupied by a first user, and wherein the first user controls admission of other users within the user space for chat sessions with the first user, and determining, based on the request for admission, whether the requesting user is denied admission to the user space or

granted admission to the user space based on the list of users stored in the storage means, as the "ban lists" described by mIRC and the ACLs described by Bunney are implemented for the specific reason of denying and allowing specific users access to specific virtual spaces, as is well known in the art, and supported in mIRC (see 02/03/95 number 9) and Bunney (see col. 2, lines 1-3 and col. 11, lines 50-60).

Therefore, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art, having the teachings of Estrada, Hatlelid and Bunney before him at the time the invention was made to modify the chat environment of Estrada and Hatlelid to include the admission denial lists of Bunney. One would have been motivated to make such a combination for the advantage of allowing a user more control over the access to their chat environments.

Estrada, Hatlelid and Bunney fail to explicitly teach the determining means also determines, based on a time associated with the request for admission, whether the second user is denied admission to the user space based on a passing of a predetermined period of time.

Morris teaches a system for facilitating interactions between users of a computer network, similar to those of Estrada, Hatlelid and Bunney. Furthermore, Morris teaches determining means for determining, based on a time associated with a request for admission, whether a user is denied admission to the user space based on a passing of a predetermined period of time, taught as the ability for user to decline a proposal by not responding, and allowing the proposal to time out, at col. 12, lines 13-25.

Therefore, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art, having the teachings of Estrada, Hatlelid, Bunney and Morris before him at the time the invention was made to modify the chat room system of Estrada, Hatlelid and Bunney to include the time out decline method of Morris. One would have been motivated to make such a combination in order

to allow a user more power and flexibility in accepting or declining a chat participant. See Morris, col. 3, lines 36-42.

Regarding claim 2, Hatlelid inherently teaches notifying means being configured to provide at least one of a visual and audible notification to the first user, in that a room initiator may accept or deny a request to join a chat, and therefore the system must alert the user to the request in some fashion.

Regarding claim 5, Estrada teaches storage means for storing first entry information generated by the first user to allow other users to enter the user space (taught as the security of different virtual rooms through the use of access control lists [ACLs] that determine the level of access users are allowed for the virtual space, at col. 15, line 54 through col. 16, line 25), distributing means for distributing the first entry information stored in the storage means to the second user in response to an instruction from the first user (taught as the ability for a user to change the ACLs, at col. 16, lines 4-25).

Bunney teaches determining means for determining whether entry information used by the second user to gain access to the user space matches the first entry information stored in the storage means when the second user uses the first entry information distributed by the distributing means to make a request for admission to the user space, wherein when the determining means determines that the entry information used by the second user matches the first entry information stored in the storage means (taught as the use of “ban lists” and ACLs described by Bunney and mIRC), the notification by the notifying means is terminated, and the control means permits the second user admission to the user space (taught inherently through the combination of Estrada, Hatlelid and Bunney, as a user given access rights in an ACL would

inherently not need to ask permission to join a space, and therefore no notification would be necessary).

Regarding claim 10, Estrada teaches storing a list of users designated by the first user as those denied admission to a virtual space (taught as the security of different virtual rooms through the use of access control lists [ACLs] that determine the level of access users are allowed for the virtual space, at col. 15, line 54 through col. 16, line 25), determining whether the second user is on the list when the second user makes the request for admission to the virtual space (taught as the ACLs and room security of col. 15, line 54 through col. 16, line 26), and terminating notification and denying the second user admission to the virtual space when it is determined that the second user is on the list (taught inherently through the combination of Estrada and Hatlelid, as a user denied access rights in an ACL would be denied access accordingly, and no notification would be necessary).

Regarding claim 11, Estrada teaches storing a list of users designated by the first user as those permitted admission to a virtual space (taught as the security of different virtual rooms through the use of access control lists [ACLs] that determine the level of access users are allowed for the virtual space, at col. 15, line 54 through col. 16, line 25), determining whether the second user is on the list when the second user makes the request for admission to the virtual space (taught as the ACLs and room security of col. 15, line 54 through col. 16, line 26), and terminating notification and permitting the second user admission to the virtual space when it is determined that the second user is on the list (taught inherently through the combination of

Estrada and Hatlelid, as a user given access rights in an ACL would inherently not need to ask permission to join a space, and therefore no notification would be necessary).

Regarding claim 12, Estrada teaches storing first entry information generated by the first user to allow other users to enter the user space (taught as the security of different virtual rooms through the use of access control lists [ACLs] that determine the level of access users are allowed for the virtual space, at col. 15, line 54 through col. 16, line 25), distributing the first entry information stored in the storage means to the second user in response to an instruction from the first user (taught as the ability for a user to change the ACLs, at col. 16, lines 4-25).

Bunney teaches determining whether entry information used by the second user to gain access to the virtual space matches the first entry information stored in the storage means when the second user uses the first entry information distributed by the distributing means to make a request for admission to the user space wherein when the determining means determines that the entry information used by the second user matches the first entry information stored in the storage means (taught as the use of “ban lists” and ACLs described by Bunney and mIRC), the notification by the notifying means is terminated, and the control means permits the second user admission to the user space (taught inherently through the combination of Estrada, Hatlelid and Bunney, as a user given access rights in an ACL would inherently not need to ask permission to join a space, and therefore no notification would be necessary).

Regarding claim 13, Estrada teaches storing a list of predetermined spatial locations in the virtual space, the spatial locations being designated by the first user, and placing the stored list in predetermined space in the virtual space in response to an instruction from the first user, taught as the security of different virtual rooms through the use of access control lists [ACLs]

that determine the level of access users are allowed for the virtual space, at col. 15, line 54 through col. 16, line 25.

Response to Arguments

Applicant's arguments filed 3 September 2008 have been fully considered but they are not persuasive.

In response to Applicant's argument that Estrada fails to teach "storing a list of spatial locations" and "a placing means for placing the list of predetermined spatial locations", the examiner respectfully disagrees. As disclosed above, Estrada shows a "place creation" method and database storage of col. 18, lines 14-35, which includes a user creating a room containing pages analogous to the claimed "spatial locations, which are subsequently accessed and navigated by other users of the room. The pages are maintained in a list. Therefore, the examiner contends that Estrada does indeed teach "storing a list of spatial locations" and "a placing means for placing the list of predetermined spatial locations".

Conclusion

Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to Michael Roswell whose telephone number is (571)272-4055. The examiner can normally be reached on 8:30 - 6:00 M-F.

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Dennis Chow can be reached on (571) 272-7767. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is 571-273-8300.

Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see http://pair-direct.uspto.gov. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free). If you would like assistance from a USPTO Customer Service Representative or access to the automated information system, call 800-786-9199 (IN USA OR CANADA) or 571-272-1000.

/Tadesse Hailu/
Primary Examiner, Art Unit 2173

Michael Roswell
9/26/2008